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SUBJECT: V-4 CONFERENCE: SLOVAKIA MAKES NICE WITH HUNGARY,  
UPSETS POLAND

Classified By: Ambassador Rodolphe M. Vallee for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)  
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11. (SBU) Summary. Prime Minister Robert Fico used the June 18-19 Bratislava V-4 summit to showcase partnership with its neighbors on pre-arranged issues of agreement, such as V-4 entry into the Schengen area. Fico and Hungarian PM Ferenc Gyurcsany also used the opportunity to orchestrate a successful joint post-summit press conference, in which they expressed plans for cooperation on several points, leaving hot-button points of contention unaddressed. They did, however, discuss the controversial Hedviga Malinova case in private. Summit participants did not agree to formally support Poland's proposal to amend the EU constitution with regard to member state voting rights. PM Fico's public comments about this proposal sounded particularly harsh, irritating Poland to an unnecessary extent. End Summary.

12. (U) As V-4 host and outgoing holder of the presidency, Slovakia organized a summit in which possible points of contention were kept to a minimum. Issues on the program included entry into the Schengen area, abolition of tourist visas to the United States, energy security, economic cooperation, and climate change. (Issues off the agenda included missile defense, cross-border ethnic relations, and Kosovo.) Participants focused on the Schengen issue as a centerpiece of their media strategy, issuing a joint press release urging the European Union -- and especially Austria -- to abide by the proposed timetable to include all of the V-4 countries within the Schengen area by January 1, 2008.

13. (SBU) The joint press conference organized between Fico and Gyurcsany was particularly notable, given that last September Gyurcsany had refused to meet with Fico during a visit to Slovakia due to the PM's decision to include the virulently anti-Hungarian Slovak national party (SNS) within his ruling coalition. Fico and Gyurcsany outlined a laundry list of points for cooperation, including construction of a highway between Kosice and Miskolc, completion of several cross-border bridges, and cooperation on Visa/Schengen issues. Hungarian party (SMK) Vice-Chairman Josef Berenyi told DCM the infrastructure agreements were long-awaited and should provide badly needed employment opportunities on both sides of the border. There were hints of conciliatory actions by Fico on sensitive ethnic issues, such as the commitment to accredit Hungarian language-based Selye University in Komarno, a goal which would force him to spend some political capital within the ruling coalition in order to achieve. Gyurcsany and Fico refused to answer direct questions from journalists about sensitive subjects such as the Malinova case or SNS leader Jan Slota. Both sides agreed they would meet regularly in the future.

14. (C) Although neither PM addressed in public the issue of the alleged beating of ethnic Hungarian student Hedviga

Malinova (and wisely so), they discussed the issue privately.

Berenyi told DCM that Fico acknowledged to Gyurcsany that, contrary to what the GOS is contending, it thinks an attack probably did occur. Berenyi did not have details of this conversation, but opined that the Fico government now had to figure out how to get out of a messy situation. Recently, press reports suggest the possibility of a witness who says he knows the identity of at least one attacker.

15. (U) The only significant point of contention on the agenda was Poland's proposal for amending European Union constitution voting rights by using a formula based on member state population. Neither Slovakia nor Hungary agreed to support the proposal. The Czech Republic gave an open-ended response, stating in the media that it would support both Poland's proposal and the proposals of other member states (Netherlands, UK) in order to help reach a compromise solution. Fico's comments to the Slovak and Polish press were particularly coarse, stating that "no one is interested in and no one understands" the Polish proposal. "Television viewers are going to wonder whether this is a mathematics conference or a meeting of Visegrad Group heads of state," he added. Fico's comments were not shown widely on Slovak television, but received significant coverage in Poland.

VALLEE